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AUTHORITY

AGO ltr 29 Apr 1980

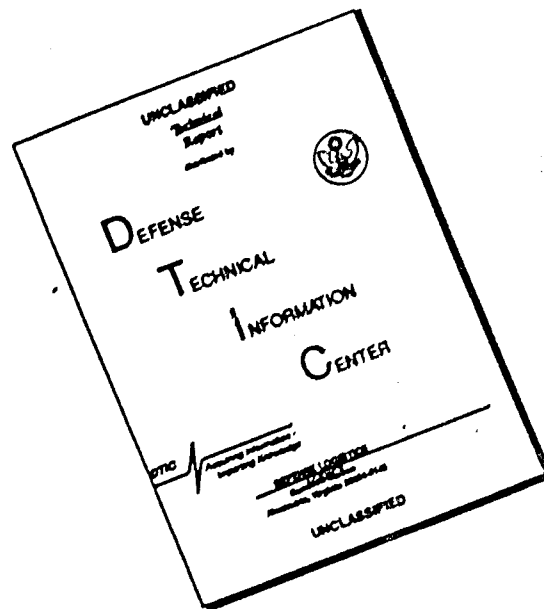
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310

IN REPLY REFER TO

AGAM-P (M) (18 Jul 69) FOR OT UT 692141

24 July 1969

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 31st Engineer Battalion, Period Ending 30 April 1969

SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Subject report is forwarded for review and evaluation in accordance with paragraph 5b, AR 525-15. Evaluations and corrective actions should be reported to ACSFOR OT UT, Operational Reports Branch, within 90 days of receipt of covering letter.

2. Information contained in this report is provided to insure appropriate benefits in the future from lessons learned during current operations and may be adapted for use in developing training material.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

*Kenneth G. Wickham*

KENNETH G. WICKHAM

Major General, USA

The Adjutant General

1 Incl  
as

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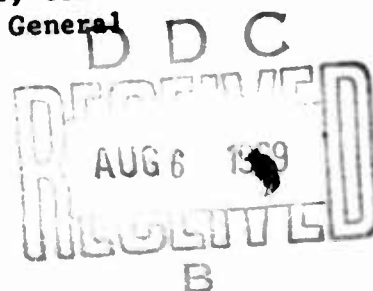
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, 31ST ENGINEER BATTALION (C)(A)  
APO San Francisco 96490

EGEA-3

9 May 1969

SUBJECT: Operational Report Lessons Learned of HQ, 31st Engineer  
Battalion (C)(A) for the period ending 30 April 1969  
RCS CSFOR-65

THRU: Commanding Officer  
79th Engineer Group (Const)  
ATTN: EGE-3  
APO 96491

Commanding Officer  
20th Engineer Brigade  
ATTN: AVBI-OS  
APO 96491

Commanding General  
US Army Vietnam  
ATTN: AVRGC-CST  
APO 96375

TO: Commander-in-Chief  
US Army Pacific  
ATTN: GPOF\*DT  
APO 96558

FOR DT UT  
692141

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### SECTION I. OPERATIONS: SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES:

a. Command: LTC George N Andrews replaced LTC Gerald P Kelley as Battalion Commander.

b. Personnel, Administration, Morale, and Discipline:

(1) At the end of the reporting period the strength of the battalion, including attached units, was 100% of that authorized. The monthly strength figures for the quarter are shown below:

	<u>STRENGTH</u>	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WC</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
28 February 1969	AUTH	41	4	966	1011
	ASGD	43	4	989	1036
31 March 1969	AUTH	41	4	966	1011
	ASGD	42	4	915	961
30 April 1969	AUTH	41	4	987	1032
	ASGD	40	4	937	981

(2) Shortages by MOS in the Battalion this reporting period are indicated in the following charts:

<u>MOS</u>	<u>AUTH</u>	<u>ASGD(FEB)</u>	<u>ASGD(MAR)</u>	<u>ASGD(APR)</u>
12B40	86	83	80	53
62F30	19	12	11	12

(3) The following charts list losses and gains during the quarter:

<u>LOSSES</u>	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WC</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>AGG</u>
CONUS Rotation	11	0	272	283
Infusion	0	0	20	20
Miscellaneous	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>27</u>
TOTAL	13	1	316	330

<u>GAINS</u>	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WC</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>AGG</u>
CONUS Replacements	8	0	334	342
Infusion	0	0	0	0
In-country Rags	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>
TOTAL	9	1	340	350

(4) Thirty-eight personnel extended their foreign service tours:

<u>OFF</u>	<u>WC</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1	0	37	38

(1)

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(5) The following awards were presented to 31st Engineer Battalion personnel:

<u>MEDALS</u>	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Bronze Star	3	1	16	20
Army Commendation	2	0	33	55
Purple Heart	0	0	5	5
Soldiers Medal	0	0	2	2

(6) The following enlisted promotions were made to the grade indicated:

	<u>E4</u>	<u>E5</u>	<u>E6</u>	<u>E7</u>	<u>E8</u>	<u>E9</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
February	25	16	1	6	0	0	48
March	31	6	2	1	0	0	40
April	<u>34</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>53</u>
TOTAL	90	35	8	7	1	0	141

(7) Disciplinary Cases:

	<u>ART 15</u>	<u>SCM</u>	<u>SCCM</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
February	17	1	2	20
March	15	0	6	21
April	<u>7</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>8</u>
TOTAL	39	1	9	49

(8) Reenlistment during this period was:

	<u>FEB</u>	<u>MAR</u>	<u>APR</u>
First Term	1	1	0
Career	6	1	1

(9) In the morale area the allocation for Rest and Recuperation received and filled by personnel of the battalion are shown below:

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>FEB</u>	<u>MAR</u>	<u>APR</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Australia	9	13	12	34
Bangkok	11	16	11	38
Hawaii	14	18	11	43
Manila	1	3	2	6
Taipei	9	11	7	27
Kuala Lumpur	0	2	0	2
Singapore	6	6	3	15
Tokyo	1	5	2	8
Hong Kong	7	10	6	23
Penang	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Sub-total	58	84	54	196

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<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>FEB</u>	<u>MAR</u>	<u>APR</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
In-country	4	4	4	12
TOTAL	<u>62</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>208</u>

### c. Intelligence and counterintelligence:

(1) All intelligence data is received from G-2, 1st Air Cav Div and IIFV intelligence summaries.

(2) The main activities of the S-2 section during the last reporting period consisted of a minesweep from Phuoc Vinh to the Song Be Bridge on LTLA conducted daily and reconnaissance for suitable sources of laterite for roads and airfields within the III CTZ. The S-2 section located a sand deposit in a stream just outside the perimeter at Camp Genvad. The sand is currently being mined and stockpiled in the base camp for concrete work, eliminating the need for sand to be conveyed to Phuoc Vinh from the Long Binh area.

### d. Plans, Operations, and Training:

(1) Operational Support: During the reporting period 89% of the total battalion effort was devoted to Operational Support missions. The greatest percentage of the battalion's effort was expended in support of the 1st Air Cav Div. There were three basic types of Operational Support missions:

(a) Direct support of combat operations.

(b) Deliberate construction to support future operations.

(c) Troop, equipment and material support to MACV and IIFV for construction and maintenance of existing roads, airfield, fire support base and MACV Advisor housing.

(2) Lines of Communication (LOC): Deliberate road restoration and emergency road repair were conducted. 2.3% of the total battalion effort was expended on LOC work during the reporting period.

(3) Base Construction: Base construction for the battalion was again held to a minimum due to priority operational support missions and construction of MACV Advisor facilities.

(4) Design and Construction Engineering: The design requirements have increased this period due to a 79th Engr Gp requirement that a design must be submitted with every DOM. The increased design requirement was handled entirely within the battalion's assets.

### (5) Training:

(a) The three hours of instruction on Command Information and engineering subjects which were given each week have been temporarily discontinued due to operational commitments.



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(b) All replacements for the 31st Engineer Battalion are currently receiving three days of replacement training at the division training center operated by the 1st Air Cav Div.

### e. Logistics and Maintenance:

(1) Maintenance: The overall average deadline rate for the battalion during the quarter has been 14.2%. The critical items average deadline rate has been 17.8%. By month these deadline rates are:

	<u>OVERALL</u>	<u>CRITICAL</u>
February	12.8%	18.4%
March	13.6%	17.6%
April	16.1%	17.5%

This deadline rate is 9.5% higher overall and 11.0% higher on critical items than it was on the last reporting period. This is attributed to the poor quality of the support maintenance this unit has received.

(2) Supply: Supply problems encountered during the reporting period were minimal. Major construction items by type projects are listed below:

	<u>BASE</u>	<u>LOC</u>	<u>MACV</u>	<u>MER</u>	<u>OTH SPT</u>	<u>REV DEF</u>
Lumber, BF	-	-	69,746	57,091	473,609	-
Corr steel, SH	-	-	676	598	4,872	-
Wire electric, LF	-	-	8,800	-	7,885	-
Insect screen, RL	-	-	12	34	51	-
Flywood, SH	-	-	418	64	-	-
Nails, LB	-	-	2,230	2,350	10,570	-
Cement, BG	-	-	270	-	2,630	-
Culvert, LF	-	-	24	-	3,372	-
M8A1 matting, MDL	-	-	-	-	3,428	-

f. Force Development: During this period there was very little movement of units within the battalion. The 2nd platoon of the 557th LE Company moved from Quan Loi to Phuoc Vinh on 15 Jan 69 to work on the Song Bo River float bridge approach and the Phuoc Vinh Airfield. They then returned to Quan Loi on 29 Mar 69 to work on the Quan Loi ASP. The 1st platoon of C Company moved to Do Duo on 5 Mar 69 to work on the MACV Housing project there. At the end of the reporting period this platoon was still at Do Duo.

g. Command Management: The aviation requirements of the battalion have increased for both fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft. The battalion requires more rotary wing aircraft for command and control on a regularly scheduled basis. The fixed wing aircraft support received by the battalion consisted of C130, C123 and C7A aircraft. The number of flights received was sufficient however the erratic arrival times of aircraft made it extremely difficult to plan aircraft loads. Often times when a C-130 was expected, a C-123 would arrive then the loads would have to be switched on the K loader causing unnecessary delays and sometimes an aborted mission.

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### h. Civil Affairs:

(1) Although the operational commitments of the battalion remained high the 31st Engr Bn was able to construct a fish pond for the village of Phu Giao which will be stocked by the Vietnamese government with fish. The battalion also donated 10 truck loads of scrap building materials to the Catholic priest in the village of Phuoc Vinh for use by the village.

### i. Civilian Personnel Affairs:

(1) The continued use of local nationals for prefab operations and KP has continued to be successful and without incident.

### j. Headquarters and Headquarters Company:

(1) Command: 1LT James C Hamm replaced 1LT William Stolz III as Company Commander on 21 March 1969.

(2) Headquarters Company has continued to support the line companies. All of the heavy equipment section's effort has been in support of the line companies.

(3) Personnel have continued to work on the Headquarters Company area by improving the drainage for the upcoming monsoon season and leveling unusable areas for use by the S-4 section for storing building materials. Bunkers were also improved due to the frequent rocket and mortar attacks during Tet.

### k. Company A, 31st Engineer Battalion:

(1) Command: 1LT Terry Simmons replaced CPT Jerry D Williams as Company Commander on 7 April 1969.

(2) Company A laid over 244,132 sq ft of M8A1 matting on the Phuoc Vin airfield, and constructed an approach road 1115' long for a float bridge over the Song Be River. This latter project required removing over 40,000 C of earth. The company was engaged in minefield clearing at Phuoc Vinh. ML for the 1st Air Cav Div, construction of six UE-1 revetments, and construction of 1000 meters of perimeter road with 180' of 72" culvert, 180' of 36" culvert and 120' of 48" culvert.

### l. Company B, 31st Engineer Battalion:

(1) Command: CPT Caldwell continued as Company Commander.

(2) During this period B Company's work effort has been at two separate locations. One platoon was stationed at Song Be and the remaining portions of the company at Quan Loi. During the reporting B Company has been primarily involved in operational support missions. This work includes repair of POL facilities, construction of four 175mm gunpads, construction of perimeter bunkers, a water supply facility, and cantonment projects for Quan Loi Base Camp. The platoon in Song Be has repaired POL facilities, the Song Be airfield, and four gun pads. They have also installed arrestors and constructed bunkers for the MCV compounds at Phuoc Binh and Song Be.

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### m. Company C, 31st Engineer Battalion:

(1) Command: 1LT Woodruff replaced CPT Webb as Company Commander on 29 March 1969.

(2) During the reporting period Company C constructed a timber trestle bridge, 14 fixed wing revetments, culverts with cement headwalls. They were also involved with minefield clearing operations and the resurfacing of the Phuoc Vinh runway with M8A1 matting. C Company also sent a platoon to Bo Den to work on a MACV Housing project.

### n. Company D, 31st Engineer Battalion:

(1) Command: 1LT Christian Helfenbein replaced 1LT Lon E Oberpillar as Company Commander on 9 February 1969. CPT Jerry D Williams replaced 1LT Christian Helfenbein as Company Commander on 6 April 1969. 1LT Lynn Page replaced CPT Jerry D Williams as Company Commander on 29 April 1969.

(2) During this period D Company completed repairs on the airfield at Katun, Bunard, and Loc Ninh, all of which are open to C-130 aircraft at present. Repairs are also under way at Tonle Cham and a Type II C7A strip is now being constructed at Duc Hue. D Company also continued to construct bunkers for the 79th Engineer Group.

### o. 557th Light Equipment Company:

(1) CPT James P Reynolds continued as Company Commander.

(2) The 557th LE Company continued work on the ASP and airfield at Phu Vinh and completed the upgrade of LTL1A from Phuoc Vinh to the Song Be bridge. The platoon at Lai Khe continued to work on base camp drainage and the perimeter road. The platoon at Quan Loi initiated construction of an ASP and continued work on upgrading QL 13 and Route 303.

## SECTION II. LESSONS LEARNED: COMMANDERS OBSERVATION, EVALUATION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Personnel: None.

b. Intelligence:

(1) OBSERVATION: When conducting a minesweep of LTL1A between Phuoc Vinh and the Song Be bridge, the sweep team found several areas of the road covered with trash. When clearing the trash from the road the team noticed several poorly concealed dummy mines in the road which consisted of beer cans filled with dirt. Upon a more thorough search with a metallic mine detector several cleverly concealed mines were found. The mines consisted of beer cans filled with explosives attached to pressure firing devices consisting of two bamboo strips wrapped with wire. When the strips were pressed together completing the circuit, the mine would detonate.

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(2) EVALUATION: The mines appeared to be of the anti-personnel type with the sweep team as their target.

(3) RECOMMENDATIONS: Any objects lying on the road should be treated as a suspected booby trap and each item must be cleared with that in mind. Although the incident may appear to be a harassing action, the clearing should proceed in a slow deliberate manner using metallic mine detectors.

### c. Operations:

(1) OBSERVATION: The M8A1 matting on the runway at Phuoc Vinh started deteriorating after less than one month of service. The main faults with the matting were the cover plates on the locking lugs breaking off, the matting cracking along its seams and the poor fit of different brands of matting. This deterioration occurred under a loading of principally C-47, C-123 and C-130 aircraft with loading cycles per day of 10, 10 and 30 respectively.

(2) EVALUATION: The M8A1 matting is not strong enough to support such frequent loads of heavy aircraft. After 30 days of use it required six hours of welding per day to keep the strip operational.

(3) RECOMMENDATIONS: Due to the short life expectancy of light duty matting it would be more economical to maintain unsurfaced runways than to lay light duty matting, which will only have to be replaced by an asphalt strip after twelve months of service.

### d. Training:

(1) OBSERVATIONS: The 31st Engineer Battalion initiated its own replacement training program consisting of two days of training per month. This training detracted from the battalion's capability available for projects and was of relatively poor quality due to lack of training aids and inexperienced instructors.

(2) EVALUATION: The knowledge the trainees gained from the training did not warrant the effort put into the training by the instructors or the hours lost on essential projects.

(3) RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that replacements who will be experiencing field type conditions be trained at one of the divisions training centers located in the vicinity of their assigned unit. Replacements from the 31st Engr Bn are currently being trained by the 1st Air Cav Div.

### e. Engineering:

#### (1) ASP Construction:

(a) OBSERVATIONS: Method for increasing job production in ASP construction.

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(b) EVALUATION: When constructing an ASP it has been found that by constructing the fingers and the inside of the bays first and the back was last that you have a lot more room in which to utilize your graders and compaction equipment, thus increasing job production.

(c) RECOMMENDATIONS: That when constructing any ASP in the future review this method and use it if it is adaptable to the construction plan.

### (2) Improve Quality of Laterite:

(a) OBSERVATION: Laterite containing a high percentage of pebbles can be improved for road construction.

(b) EVALUATION: When doing horizontal construction with a quality of laterite that has no binder, a construction material which is easy to compact and grade may be obtained by using a ratio of 2 to 1, laterite to clay.

(c) RECOMMENDATIONS: If using laterite which has little or no binding quality, open a clay pit and combine the laterite and clay in a 2 to 1 ratio respectively.

### (3) MRS 100 scraper pan:

(a) OBSERVATION: Vulnerability of hydraulic hoses on MRS 100.

(b) EVALUATION: The hydraulic hoses to the pan on the MRS 100 are mounted on the sides of the pan only 2 feet from the ground. They are exposed to tree stumps and other objects sticking up from the ground.

(c) RECOMMENDATIONS: A modification work order be approved to shield these lines.

### (4) Song Be Bridge:

(a) OBSERVATION: An underground stream was discovered while excavating an approach for a float bridge across the Song Be river. The stream was located approximately 100' from the river.

(b) EVALUATION: Water needed to be drained off to allow construction of the road and to prevent the road from being undermined.

(c) RECOMMENDATIONS: Area should be carefully surveyed to insure the soil is not overly porous and does not contain trapped water or underground streams. If such obstacles are excavated a french drain will drain off a sufficient amount of water to allow construction of a road.

f. Logistics: None.

g. Organization: None.

(8)

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h. Other: Communications:

(1) OBSERVATION: Telephone cables strung from pole to pole are susceptible to damage by mortar and rocket fragments.

(2) EVALUATION: A thirteen pair telephone cable was in use in the Headquarters Company area. In the last rocket attack this cable received seven major breaks and numerous smaller breaks due to shrapnel. This disrupted more than half of the telephone service available in the company.

(3) RECOMMENDATIONS: All telephone cables, when possible, should be buried at a minimum depth of eighteen inches. Cable diagrams should be made and forwarded to the Deputy Installation Coordinator.



GEORGE N ANDREWS  
LTJ, GE  
Commanding



ECE-3 (9 May 69) 1st Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report Lessons Learned of HQ, 31st Engineer  
Battalion (C)(A) for the period ending 30 April 1969

DA, HEADQUARTERS, 79th Engineer Group, APO 96491

20 May 1969

TO: Commanding Officer, 20th Engineer Brigade, ATTN: AVEI-OS, APO 96491

1. This headquarters concurs with the inclosed Operational Report with the following exceptions:

a. Reference Section I a, page 1; LTC Andrews replaced LTC Kelley on 26 April 1969. LTC Andrews arrived from the 45th Engineer Group and LTC Kelley was reassigned as deputy IIFV Engineer.

b. Reference Section I, d, (5), page 3; The three hours weekly instruction to include Command Information have been reinstated as of this date.

c. Reference Section I, e, (1), page 4; The support maintenance for the 31st Engineer Battalion has recently increased its effort in supporting the 31st Engineer Battalion. It is the opinion of this command that the Support Maintenance for the 31st Engineer Battalion is doing everything within their capability to improve the maintenance situation for the 31st Engineer Battalion.

d. Reference Section II, e, (3); An EIR is being prepared for submission through proper channels.

2. With the above exceptions this headquarters considers this report an adequate summary of the battalion's activities during the reporting period. The report is submitted in accordance with USARV Reg 525-15.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



SHIGEMORI MORITA  
CPT, AGC  
Adjutant

AVBI-OS (9 May 69) 2nd Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report of 31st Engineer Battalion (Combat)  
for the Period Ending 30 April 1969, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)

DA, HEADQUARTERS, 20TH ENGINEER BRIGADE, APO 96491

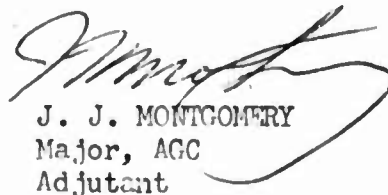
TO: Commanding General, United States Army Vietnam,  
ATTN: AVHGC-DST, APO 96375

1. Submitted in accordance with USARV Regulation 525-15, dated 13 April 1968.
2. Subject report for the 31st Engineer Battalion (Combat) has been reviewed and is considered adequate with the following comments:

a. Section I, paragraph e(1), page 4: Corrective measures are being taken to improve Direct Support Maintenance for the 31st Battalion. Communication problems between the 31st Battalion and their support are being alleviated.

b. Section II, paragraph e(2), page 8: Nonconcur. The recommendation of combining clay with laterite for road construction is inadequate from a quality engineering standpoint. Addition of clay may give the appearance of forming a dense surface and compaction may seem easier; however, during the rainy season the water content will reduce the shear strength of the clay, resulting in failure of the road.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

  
J. J. MONTGOMERY  
Major, AGC  
Adjutant

Copies Furnished:  
CO, 79th Engr Gp  
CO, 31st Engr Bn



AVHGC-DST (9 May 69) 3d Ind  
SUBJECT: Operational Report Lessons Learned of HQ, 31st Engineer Battalion  
(C)(A) for the period ending 30 April 1969 RCS CSFOR-65

HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY, VIETNAM, APO San Francisco 96375 22 JUN 1969

TO: Commander in Chief, United States Army, Pacific, ATTN: GPOP-DT,  
APO 96558

1. This headquarters has reviewed the Operational Report-Lessons Learned for the quarterly period ending 30 April 1969 from Headquarters, 31st Engineer Battalion (C)(A).


2. Comments follow:

a. Reference item concerning M8A1 matting, section II, page 7, paragraph c; concur. USARV has recently disapproved a request for M8A1 matting at Quan Loi for this reason. When there is a high frequency of C-130 traffic at an airfield the total maintenance effort is less with an unsurfaced airfield. M8A1 matting will provide satisfactory service for C7A, Army fixed wing aircraft, Air Force FAC aircraft and occasional C-123 traffic. No further action required.

b. Reference item concerning Training, section II, page 7, paragraph d; concur. USARV Training Regulation 350-1 does not limit replacement training to those personnel who will experience field type conditions. This training is required for all newly arrived personnel and is required to be completed within seven days after arrival in RVN. The use of division replacement training centers is encouraged. No further action required. Unit will be advised.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

Cy furn:  
31st Engr Bn  
20th Engr Bde

  
A.R. GUENTHER  
CPT. AGC  
ASST. ADJUTANT GENERAL

GPOP-DT (9 May 69) 4th Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report of HQ, 31st Engineer Battalion (C) (A)  
for Period Ending 30 April 1969, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)

HQ, US Army, Pacific, APO San Francisco 96558 10 JUL 69

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the  
Army, Washington, D. C. 20310

This headquarters has evaluated subject report and forwarding indorse-  
ments and concurs in the report as indorsed.

FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF:



C. L. SHORTT  
CPT, AGC  
Asst AG

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